

We claim:-

1. A method for the production of C₁-C₁₀-alkyl 2-keto-L-gulonates by esterification of 2-keto-L-gulonic acid anhydrate with an anhydrous C₁-C₁₀-alkyl alcohol in the presence of an acidic homogeneous catalyst in a reaction cascade comprising at least two reactors, one of these reactors being a tubular reactor, without the water forming in the esterification being removed from the reaction space.
2. The method according to claim 1, wherein methyl or ethyl 2-keto-L-gulonate is prepared.
3. The method according to claim 1, which is carried out continuously.
4. The method according to claim 1, wherein the weight ratio of alkyl alcohol to ketogulonic acid anhydrate is from 1.5 : 1 to 5 : 1.
5. The method according to claim 1, wherein the esterification is carried out at from 50 to 70°C at atmospheric pressure.